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CHRISTIANITY

IN THE

NINETEENTH CENTURY

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BY

A. M. FAIRBAIRN, D.D.,

Principal of Airedale College, Bradford.

Author of "The City of God," "Studies in the Life of Christ," etc.

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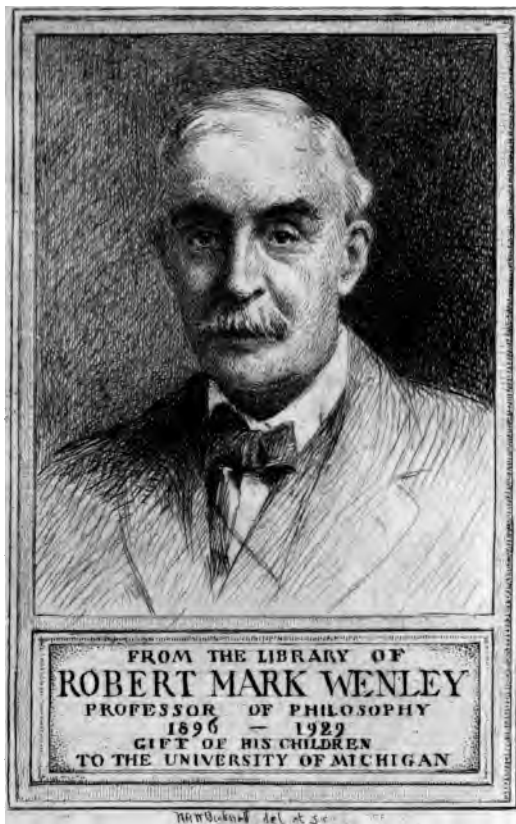
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CHRISTIANITY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

THE nineteen Christian centuries that lie now almost completed behind us, form the most momentous chapter in the history of man, richer by far in all that makes for his good than the unnumbered centuries that went before. This pre-eminence they owe to the presence and action of the Spirit of Christ. It is that Spirit, and what it has attempted and achieved, that most and best distinguishes the modern from the ancient world, the new from the old civilization. Yet, though these centuries reveal in clear and indubitable fact the character and potency of the Christian religion, they have not exhausted its best possibilities, or called all its energies into play. These have been conditioned in their development and exercise by the Churches. These Churches are not the religion, but its mightiest and most characteristic creation, and through them it has acted, and still acts, most directly on man, and in history. They represent its being, and interpret its truth to the world, which judges the religion by the Churches, not the Churches by the religion. But the best of them do not realize the ideal of Jesus; the most they can do is to make an attempt at it, the less perfect, the more it claims finality. In every Church, as in every man, there is a double self, each with its own life; the one is spiritual, descends out of heaven

from God; the other is at once formal and material, proceeds from man, and is of the earth. What is achieved through the Spirit may be done by one church, but is the common possession and glory of all the Churches; what is performed in the weakness and imperfection of the human conditions is, and remains, the church's own, evidence of the incomplete subordination of the society on earth to the Lord in heaven. The extraordinary thing is, not that the Churches have so often fatally erred and disastrously failed in duty, but that they have been able, in spite of their errors and failures, so far to obey the Christ, and to render so much service to man.

The Churches of to-day have no easy task; never did God lay on men harder or graver duties. They inherit both the good and the evil, the honour and the reproach of the past. If history has its glory, it has also its shame, and no history has known brighter glory or darker shame than the history of the Church. And if we are proud of the one, we are no less humbled by the other. We dare not rejoice in evil, least of all when done or suffered by any member of the body of Christ. I would, were it possible, have our Churches to feel the failings or sins of their sister Churches, as if they were their own; and to feel concerning their own sins as if they were injuries or wrongs to their sisters. For these past, as for all present sins, by whatever Church committed, we all suffer, whether we will or no; they weaken our energies, hinder our efforts, create the passion or the prejudice that, unmoved, turns away from the most persuasive speech. I would have our Churches to be jealous of nothing in any Church save its greater goodness and larger truth; to have no ambition but the ambition to excel in zeal for God and devotion to man. The pride that does not confess faults *does not* own brotherhood, is deficient alike in ethical

character and filial spirit. There is no man so much a sinner as the man who believes himself altogether a saint, and the Church which most claims to be infallible is the Church which has most frequently and deeply fallen. But to feel the evil of the past is to learn by it, to be the better fitted to live and work in the present. The Church ought to be the most progressive of all societies, foremost in every kind and province of good. Its place is not behind but before the times; it ought not to follow, but to lead the State. And this obligation increases with age. Many Christian ideas have ceased to be the exclusive property of the Church, have become the common possession of the time; but in becoming so they have simply created the conditions that not only allow, but demand from all Christian communities the exercise of greater and higher activities. The more society improves the more possible it becomes for the Churches to pursue nobler methods, and attempt vaster things. If they become mere conservative agencies, anxious only to maintain things as they are, then they abdicate their functions, prefer the real they can enjoy to the ideal they ought to seek and realize. A Church is bound by the past only to excel the past, however noble it may have been; to be merely what has been is to be indifferent to what ought to be. It were better to have no history than to have even the most splendid were its years but a succession of iron bands.

But the Churches have not only to face the difficulties and responsibilities created by the past; they have also to confront those peculiar to the present. They stand in relations to living thought and action that cannot but touch with concern all interested in the future of religion, and society, and man. These relations are troubled, surcharged, indeed, with elements of collision and conflict, and he must be at once a blind and a sanguine man who

neither sees the crisis nor feels the danger it brings. The responsibilities of the situation rest with the Churches, not because they are solely or even mainly responsible for its creation, but because they are altogether responsible for its issues. It is not enough, in these days, that a society have a large inheritance; it depends on its stewardship whether the inheritance be spared, and the society honoured. Men's minds are not at this moment in a credulous or patient mood; they are critical and sceptical of all traditional beliefs, impatient of all customary sanctities and honorary institutions. And this is a mood men of real beliefs and institutions of approved beneficence will not fear. He but ill understands Christianity who thinks that it is most honoured where least questioned, or that it has most power where men are most credulous. The days when its right to be was most sharply challenged were the days when it displayed the most victorious energy; and if the Churches now be as dutiful, wise, and magnanimous as were the Churches then, the result will not be different.

Now, I hope it will not be considered too large or too ambitious an undertaking, if I attempt, from this chair, not to discuss, but to speak simply and seriously concerning the relation of our Christian Churches and Religion to our Age. I feel profoundly the responsibility of venturing to touch so grave and vast a theme; I feel still more profoundly the responsibility which rests on all Christian men, and teachers, and Churches. In this matter we do not stand alone; all Christian bodies stand together, bound, possibly in spite of themselves, into unity, on the one hand by loyalty to their Master, on the other by their no amn.duties to man. To be a Christian Church is to be devotion to .of all societies, charged with the highest and does not own'', of missions: the mission of interpreting

God to man, of reconciling man to God. A Church exists for the purposes of God as manifested in Christ, and must be judged in relation to those purposes, and by no other standard whatever. But if a Church loses hold of God and of man, it loses hold of its end, therefore of its very right to be. Its truths are eternal, speak to the human heart everywhere; and, if it loses touch of the human heart, it is because it has lost possession or comprehension of its own truths. And a Church void of living truth, bearing only dead dogmas in its bosom, what is it good for but to be buried out of sight of man?

I.

Let us begin, then, by noting this:—While our subject is Christianity in the present, it cannot be discussed without reference to Christianity in the past. All really religious action, while done in time, has eternal relations and issues; we build on the past, but in the present and for the future. Our religion s a living thing, its history is a growth, the earliest ages live in the latest, augmenting their energies, conditioning their behaviour. An historical Church is not the same as an historical Christianity; the latest and least historical of Churches is, possibly in a greater degree than the oldest, heir to all that is historical in the religion of Christ. What belongs either to Catholicism or Romanism is the inalienable possession of the Church of Rome; but what in its history has been achieved by the truth and Spirit of Christ is the common property of Christendom, the inalienable inheritance of all its Churches. There is, then, an historical religion, with which the religion of to-day stands organically connected, its product, yet not its culmination, a stage in the path of the eternal purpose that runs through the ages. This is something infinitely nobler than an historical

Church, for it signifies the action of God within the limits and in the forms of time, working in all the Churches, using the meanest and worst-designed agencies for ends far beyond and above themselves. Whatever is created by the truth of God and through His Spirit belongs to this religion, for it is but His externalized action, the fruits of the life of God as realized in the spirit of man. It is confined to no Church, for the Spirit and the Truth were before, and are within and above all Churches. Its peculiar home is with the elect of God, the sons of holiness and light, who hear His Voice and obey His Will. They constitute the only true Catholic Church, invisible, spiritual, eternal, and the monument of their being in time is the history of the Christian religion.

Now, it is not possible to exhibit here the significance of the successive stages in the life of this historical religion. All that is possible is to select one or two salient points needed to explain and illustrate the work of the religion in our own day.

1. The earliest history is still the richest in instruction and inspiration. Of the Apostolic Age there has been speech already from this chair; its lessons were simply emphasized by the sub-apostolic. Christianity and the Roman Empire were born together, the one at its birth the mightiest, the other the feeblest of human things. The founder of the Empire was the well-praised Augustus; of the religion, the crucified Christ. A century and half later, under the Antonines, in what a famed historian* has, with unconscious irony, called "the most happy and prosperous" period in history, the religion had its hardest struggle for existence. It was hated with the merciless hate the proud and strong have for the low-born and the weak, was met and confounded by the coarse scorn and

* Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," Ch. iii.

invincible prejudice of the vulgar and the ignorant, was oppressed and mishandled by the absolute power which our famed historian described as "under the guidance of virtue and wisdom," was defamed by the lying malice of Judaism, was mocked by the pitiless satire of Lucian, which might well have shamed modest truth into silence, was exposed to the borrowed slanders, superfine criticism, and philosophic reasoning of Celsus, was confronted and, on what seemed its own chosen ground, almost surpassed by the stoical calm and ethical elevation of Marcus Aurelius. Yet so vast were the energies the despised faith developed in the struggle that in another century and half the Roman Emperor was a professed Christian, and the cross the symbol that floated from the capitol.

And what were the victorious energies? Hate was met by love, a love that refused to fear the worst the persecutor could do, that refused to hate the persecutor for doing his worst, and the love too strong to die before hate became its death, subdued it into forbearance, if not into gentleness. Coarse scorn was met by gracious ministries, service of the poor, help of the orphan, comfort of the widow, soft tendance of the diseased, sweetest consolation of the dying. Bonds, imprisonment, and death were answered by meekness and obedience. Men the law unjustly handled, did the law honour by living blameless lives. Slander and mockery they met by pureness and sincerity; it was a noble boast of Tertullian's that the Christians were the only men condemned without crime, despised without reproach. Criticism was answered by history and exegesis, philosophical argument by a new and nobler philosophy, which placed at the source of all things an eternal Father, bound humanity as a son to Him by an incarnate Redeemer, and made all true thought and speech of man stand in glorious unity alike from the

inspiration of the Holy Ghost. That philosophy was no system of abstract truth, fit only for the cultivated, but a very body of life, making the humblest feel as if the very secret of the universe had at last become articulate. And men who so believed—however lowly born—could live, think, and speak as grandly as Marcus Aurelius, while acting with a lofty magnanimity and large beneficence to which the sainted stoical Emperor never attained. These were the forces that triumphed in that wonderful struggle. The victorious energies were not ecclesiastical, were not born of organisation, and marshalled and led by official authorities, but were spiritual, ethical, religious, begotten from above by the truth of God in the spirit of man. And the victory won by the religion secured for the religion the right to live, to work through human energies and under human conditions as the divine grace reigning unto righteousness.

2. With the victory of the religion, what it is the fashion to call "the Church" entered on a new phase—the *political*. It took corporate being, and stood first under, then alongside, and finally over the State. The causes of this change, the need for it, the struggle by the greater of the Fathers against its consequences—these and such-like things do not here concern us. What we have to note is simply this:—How and what the religion worked under the strange and encumbering conditions. It breathed a kinder spirit into the State, made the laws less cruel, gentler to the weak, more protective of the innocent. The brutal games were abolished, law threw a broader shield over women and children and helpless infancy, the slave obtained new rights, justice grew milder, but the more bestial sins were followed by more terrible penalties. And because of the life that worked in it the Church grew stronger, as the State grew

weaker. Rome perished, but Christianity survived. In the dissolution of the old order, the Church alone lived, subdued and then absorbed the barbarians, and so became the centre round which the new order crystallized. The force that organized the new society became by right the regnant force, and remained it for centuries. The Church did well for Europe in those days; its supremacy was the supremacy of law, though of law as administered by men who most err when they most claim to be above error. Its idea of law was a religious idea, born of the belief that God must have an order, and that this order must be revealed and realized in the Society that best expresses His will. Its idea of sin was also a religious idea, embodied, in many a terrible form, the conviction that to man the last calamity was to be in conflict with the law and nature of God. Its notion of salvation was a religious notion, a crude manner of saying that the supreme need of man was to be in holy and happy harmony with God's will. In allowing birth no legal place within the Church, in opening its highest places to the ambition of the lowliest born, it proclaimed the equality of Christian manhood. By its religious houses it declared that religion was the supreme thing, that the man most possessed of divine truth was the holiest man. By the arts they cultivated, and the cultivation alike of nature and mind they spread, toil was made honourable, art spiritual, industry fostered and ennobled. Through its mighty system-builders, men like Anselm and Peter the Lombard, Duns Scotus and Aquinas, it exalted the search for truth and the life of thought, showing by the reverence that was paid him that the schoolman was greater than the warrior, wielded a vaster and more abiding power. Men often say, "In those days the Church ruled mind," meaning thus to condemn both ruler and

ruled; but it were truer to say, "Mind ruled the Church, and when mind ceased to rule the Church the Church ceased to rule man." What it did it did not by virtue of its organisation but in spite of it, by virtue of the truth it carried, the spirit that dwelt in its nobler sons and distilled through its multitudinous members into the common life of man. A Church that owns men so possessed and inspired of largest love as Bernard and Francis of Assisi, so saintly as Tauler and Thomas à Kempis, so compact of faith and imagination as Dante and Fra Angelico, is a Church that through its very godliness is owned of God. Where beautiful saintliness has been realised, divine guidance has not been denied. Yet, much as religion did in and through the political Church, that Church did one splendid, though negative, service to religion—it proved on the most stupendous scale that a political society, as organized and administered of man, could never be the city of God. Rome was not a city of saints, crime did not disqualify for office, or displace from power, the highest crown came not seldom to the greatest and most impenitent sinner. But a system that allows rewards to the guilty is no religious system, religion may act through it, but it is not a religion. Its ecclesiastical worldliness is its own, its spirituality is of God. As I said before, so I say again, the first belongs without dispute to Rome; the second is the inheritance of all the Churches.

3. Against this ideal of religion, and its too faithful realization in the organized sacerdotal and political Church, a revolt was inevitable. Reason recoiled from the ideal, conscience protested against the reality, and the result was the Reformation, which fitly came in the days of the elegant Pagan Pope, Leo X. That event was no mere reaction *against* an exhausted and tyrannical system; it was a

noble and successful endeavour to find a more excellent way. By it Christian truth got nearer to man, and man nearer to it, and so new elements of the religion were relieved for the creation of a higher manhood, and for incorporation with society. Sin was so terrible a thing that no man or Church could deal with it, only God could; salvation so great a thing that it must be a divine work through and through. The more directly God and man stood face to face, the more sovereign, yet paternal, God became, and the worthier, the nearer in dignity to Deity grew man. Religion became more spiritual, more a matter of the conscience and reason, bringing God into the conscience, reconciling the reason with the eternal. And so at the same moment, and by the same act, religion became the source at once of order and freedom, nay, freedom was order, because obedience to the law which was revealed to reason, but interpreted and enforced by conscience. Hence came a larger and higher view of life, liberty was necessary to it, and not simply civil but religious. And so there came wars of an altogether new and strange sort—not for conquest or patriotism, but for the right to worship God as the reason knew, and the conscience honoured, and the heart loved Him. The battle for this freedom is not yet ended, though to the long-assured victory there is no more needed the noise of the warrior and the garment rolled in blood. In gaining it we gain the condition most necessary to the highest things. Bondage depraves, slaves are proverbial for their vices; to be his best and most virtuous man must be free. Religion without freedom is not religious, no truth of the reason, no concern of the conscience, no joy of the heart, no life for the exercise and ennoblement of the spirit of man. Till this freedom was won reformed Christianity could only develop its sterner side, but once the victory was assured, the

gentler graces came to mix with and soften the severer virtues. And so the older Puritan made possible, nay, in process of time became the newer philanthropist, a man who lived for humanity, creating or administering the beneficent agencies that lessen human sin, lighten human sorrow, make the earth happier to man, and lovelier before Go

4. But freedom had not only to be won, it had to be used; and the wise use of it does not come by nature. It has to be learned; experience teaches, exercise is education. Reason, free, turned to ask religion, What right it had to be? What it was? and what was necessary to its being? Hence came the problem of the eighteenth century, the work of what on its subjective side is called its Rationalism, on the objective its Deism. In the history of our faith, what is so termed had its function and its place. Reason wished to know whether objective truths were necessary to religion. Could it not survive the denial of those elements that transcended or seemed to contradict experience? As these denied left nothing distinctively Christian, the question rose—might it not be possible to construct a religion by a logical or ratiocinative process? Nay, must not the one so constructed be the religion of religions, underlying all, and in all concealed, Nature's own creation, fittest worship for the Spirit? On these points the eighteenth century made its immense experiment, tried in its shallow way to rationalize Christianity, but found that it died in the process; then tried to evoke the religion of nature, but found that it would not be evoked, was indeed not there to answer, had never existed, could by no manner of persuasion be made to exist. Religion was transcendental, a creation of God, due to His action in time, indeed His highest work in and through the Spirit. Where history is fullest of God, *the creative force* is mightiest, the creative result highest.

And so the Son who declared the Father perfected religion in humanity, His appearance was its becoming. It is real only as it is objectively true; deny its objective truth, and it becomes a dream of heaven to one age, but an illusion of sensuous childhood to another and later. Religion to be real must not be built out of the reminiscence or anticipations of a nature struggling Godward, but must descend from God to man, that it may lift man to God. The century that made this evident did a needed work, showed once for all that the religion which is not alive with Deity is for man no living religion.

5. Now, it is necessary that we think of the Christian religion as living under varied forms during those ages, doing a specific work in each, entering in each more completely into the life of man, creating the conditions in him that allowed a freer, and higher, and fuller development in it. When we so think, we conceive it as the great factor of his progress, his wealth, virtue, happiness; yet as creating these only that it may unfold the energies that shall be creative in a still higher degree. The continued progress of man depends on the increasing power of his religion, and it is only through its past that one can understand its present and forecast its future. But to complete our idea of its past, it is necessary to remember one thing: its mightiest achievements are not outer, they are inner, spiritual, personal. To estimate what it has done we would need to know what it has been to all the individuals who have believed and lived by it. Religion guides the course of history only as it inspires the lives of men, and it is because the Christian has done so much for persons that it has been so mighty for good to the collective race. An analysis of the contributions Christianity has made not only to the sum total of human happiness, but to the conditions necessary to

its being, is not possible, simply because its most characteristic contributions have been not beneficent ideas, laws, institutions, but living men, made happy themselves, and inspired by an enthusiasm for human happiness and good. The persons are indeed possessed by the ideas, and so made obedient to the laws and creative of the institutions, but these are the means of man while men are the means of God. His beneficence creates our benevolence, that through it His own high purpose may be fulfilled. And consider how potent the Christian ideas have been in making man into a means for the ends of God. They have made us conceive the universe, not as the seat of a dark fate, or cold necessity, or impersonal law, but as the home of a gracious God, who made and who loves all. They have made the misery of man a pain to God, and so its cure the sacred duty of all the godlike; the happiness of man the joy of God, and so its increase the function of all active godliness. They have deepened, almost created, the sense of sin, intensified the sympathy with sorrow till it has become almost too painful to bear, but only that men may the more hate and avoid sin, the more help and relieve sorrow. They have created new virtues, sweeter humanities, nobler and wider philosophies; they have dignified man, surrounding him, however humbly placed, with an almost infinite significance; have exalted conscience, given to reason its most sacred rights, and claimed for liberty its cardinal place. But the mere analytical handling of Christian ideas can never disclose their wealth, or show how they have enriched the spirit of man, and enlarged and perfected his life. The religion must be studied, not in the abstract, but in the concrete; not in its institutions, but in the persons possessed of its living truths Greater than Christian Churches are Christian men; not in Councils or Synods, not in Colleges of Cardinals or

Houses of Convocation, lower and higher, are the presence and life of Christ most fitly or fully seen, but in the conscience He has pacified and purged from its guilt, in the heart He has soothed in its sorrow and sweetened into holy resignation, in the character He has formed to deeds of nobleness and sacrifice, in the men He has made friends of their kind, enthusiasts for goodness, truth and freedom, in the spirits for whom He has changed the shadow of death into the sunrise of immortality. The making of these men, and the consequent working the works they have accomplished, are the supreme achievements of the Christ. Through them history has been a record of human progress; their lives have exhibited the action of God in humanity. The more they have multiplied, the humaner has grown the spirit, the nobler the ideal of man. And this progress has proved that the idea immanent in the race is the ideal active in the religion, and the more its activity is manifested the more apparent becomes the correspondence between the human idea and the religious ideal. What the Creator meant man to be, man becomes through the religion of Christ, and this agreement of idea and fulfilment is explicable only through the identity of their source. The religion comes to be that the idea involved in the creation might be evolved and realized.

II.

Now, this hurried glance at the historical progress and action of the Christian Religion brings us directly face to face with our proper question—its relation to this age, its work in it, and how this work is to be done. It is not my purpose to use history as an apology for our religion, a vindication of its right to be. Its achievements in the centuries behind us can never, taken alone, be an adequate

reason for claiming for it or conceding to it control over the century in which we live. The right of Christianity to be must be sought not in its achievements, but in its capabilities; not in what it has done, but in its capability of doing. This, and nothing less, is worthy of it; if it had voice no smaller plea would it allow to be urged in its name. To live by retrospect is at once the privilege and the proof of age, seemly where active life is over, because evidence alike of what has been and what is. To live in deed and endeavour is the sign and duty of manhood, what alone becomes quick reason and unexhausted energies. To have served man constitutes a claim on his gratitude; to be able to serve him even better than he has yet been served, constitutes a claim on his faith and obedience. And this is the claim that in the face of this Nineteenth Century we make in behalf of our religion. If it be but a monument of past service whose good has all been incorporated in that mighty entity called the Race, I have no wish to see it live; but if it is the home and centre of the healthiest, highest, and happiest energies that still work in humanity, then it ought to live and affirm its right to live, that humanity may be saved.

Here, then, is our position:—Christianity is full of unexhausted energies, of latent and undeveloped capabilities, fitted to meet the deepest and most clamant wants of the day. The development of these energies and capabilities has been made possible by the course and progress of the past; their exercise is made necessary by the needs of the present. These needs Christianity has helped to create, in order that by satisfying them it might make man more thoroughly and perfectly Christian. In the present I hear only a deep call to our religion to be itself and do the work God sent it to perform; in the past I see only a slow [illegible]*th into the* wisdom and strength that the better

qualifies it to respond. From the Church of the Apologists and Martyrs we must learn to wed thought to action, to think nobly if we are to live bravely and well, to live purely if we are to understand our faith, to honour it and make it honoured. The best apology for it is not offensive criticism, it is construction. We do but poor service if we simply demolish a rival system, the greatest possible if we add but a living stone to the temple of truth. From the organized political Church we learn that religion has to do with everything, ought to pervade and govern the State, penetrate and affect all laws, reach and benefit all classes, regulate and inspire all lives; but we also learn that the political ideal will never accomplish this, will accomplish only the very opposite, turn religion into worldiness, and make the Church the playground of the hungry and the ambitious. From the reformed Churches we learn that religion must be free, a matter of the spirit, impossible without personal conviction, real only as the conviction is real. From the eighteenth century we learn that the truth of the matter believed is necessary to the reality of the belief and its control over the life; that to be without knowledge of God is to be without religion, and where the knowledge is fullest and purest the religion will be most perfect and authoritative.

But it is not enough to be enriched by the lessons and experience of the past; they enrich us only that we may the better do our work in the present. Our fathers were in many respects greater than we, greater as theologians, scholars, ecclesiastics, possibly, too, as men; but in one vital respect our day differs from theirs, it is more complex, has a vaster variety of elements in its life, more radical problems in its thought. The questions —religious, intellectual, moral, social, political, and ecclesiastical—that rise and demand solution, and demand

it from religion, if religion is to continue to live, exceed in multitude and in difficulty anything older and simpler times knew or could have conceived. In dealing with these questions the most heroic is the wisest way—it ought to be shown that the best solution is to be found in religion. The religion which comes from God must be able to satisfy the whole man; the complications of the most complex life ought not to be too much for it. To be silent about the things that most concern man, is to renounce the right to lead him. Men cannot help themselves, they simply must ask their questions, whether religion answers or no; and they will take the best solution they can find, and make of it a faith or—a fetish. Religion has the answer, but the answer it has must be given through the Churches and the men who are its interpreters. They stand between religion and the age, and have duties to both, and must be loyal to both, not sacrificing either to the other, leaving the age ignorant of religion or religion dumb and impotent before the age. But before a man can interpret religion, bring out all its infinite significance for mind and life, he must allow religion to take possession of his spirit, so to penetrate and pervade him by its mighty energies and truths, that it shall be to him an inspiration and he be for it a prophet. If there are men who know both their age and their religion, these are certain to be made to know each other. Give us men who can interpret the speech of God, and we shall find it the completest answer to the deepest questions of man.

III.

But from the religion in the past and its problem in the present, we must now advance to another point—the Attitude of the Age to the Religion. Here it would be easy to speak in terms hopeful, critical or despondent as to the

Zeitgeist, the mind, temper and tendency of the times, but it will be better to make the attempt to be within our narrow limits analytical and judicial.

i.

It must be confessed that the religious spirit of the day is earnest, active, philanthropic, missionary. The severest critic, were he also honest and just, could not say less. He might say that its zeal was narrow, unenlightened, often sectional and bitter, ill-advised as to means, and not wise in it ends, but he could not question its reality. Nor can its beneficence be doubted; the philanthropy of to-day is, happily, far from altogether, but mainly religious. Its springs are in the Churches; its apostles and ministers are the men they make. Missions, too, home and foreign, are abundant; it is manifest that all Churches are possessed of the belief that Christianity is still able to save souls. The evils of the times are many, and lie on the surface; any fool can see them, and may well be wise enough to reprove them. The sects are multitudinous, their spirit is exclusive and fierce, nay, even cruel; yet the passion of intense sincerity is a nobler thing than the cynicism of indifference or the superfine disdain that can only despise zeal for the truth, not understand it. Conventionalism, the worship of the established and the customary, the profession that is saved from being hypocrisy only by being innocently unconscious of any reality to be professed—these, and such like, are shameful, as all shams are; but there is something worse than Pharisaic respectability, there is Pharisaic vice, guiltiness avowed and ostentatious. Manners-that are only manners, and not ways and modes of a noble spirit, are poor things, but at the worst good manners must always be better than bad. There are sins enough of religious men and communities to reprove, unveracities, infidelities, uncharitableness, jealousy of

another's good, glorying in another's evil, devotion to the knight-errantries rather than to the patient and fruitful husbandries of beneficence; but the man who thinks and speaks of these as if they were the heart and whole of living religion, is like a man who should declare he could not see the sun for his spots, or who should mistake the nod of Homer for the measure and movement of his verse.

In spite of its sins and shortcomings, the religious life of to-day is strong and good, full of purpose and endeavour. On the practical side especially, it is worthy of high praise. Imagine a Roman, who in the first century had watched the beginnings of Christianity, come to see how it looked and lived in the nineteenth: let us say, a Tacitus. He brings his strong moral sense, his hatred of lying and deceit, his scorn for the pomp that clothed, but could not hide, the mean and treacherous soul, his insight into men and movements, his desire, not simply to describe events, but to know their causes. He finds that the savage is more intelligible than the civilized; the modern English harder to understand than the ancient Germans; but, by-and-bye, to his observant eye and analytic intellect and clear judgment things become lucid, ordered, explicable, though, to find their causes, he has had to traverse the eighteen centuries that divide his own day from ours. And we may conceive him speaking somewhat thus:—"Events do not always verify the judgment of the historian, and the man nearest to a thing may understand it least. Posterity, if I may so describe this terrible English people, has accepted my reading of the imperial history, and judges the emperors, their crimes, their follies, their arbitrary violence, their frightful ingratitude, very much as I have taught it. Men see, too, that I read the meaning of those Germans rightly; if the Romans had only learned the lesson, the history of

the world might have been so different! But in one thing I committed a tremendous mistake. I do not see how I could have judged otherwise, yet history has been one immense falsification of my judgment. I thought the religion of Christ an execrable, a detestable superstition; and now I find it the religion of the civilized world, a world so much more civilized than our own, and it the cause of the peculiar civilization. The moral purity of the religion is extraordinary. These churches are not like our temples, their worship is not made an occasion of lust and a cloak for sin, they are the best schools of morals, men are made good in them, taught to be just and free citizens, to live benevolent and beneficent lives. Indeed, this religion and these Churches seem to be the moral heart of this people, the source and spring of all their good. What is so unlike our old Roman life and ways as to be unintelligible to me becomes intelligible when looked at through this religion. These English think of foreign peoples as we never did — as men, as brothers, as persons they would like to believe and live as they do; rich and cultivated as they are, possessing within themselves every good men need desire, they yet send out men to teach their God to the veriest savages. Our gods were our own, so was our religion, but this God and religion for everybody has created a sense of human brotherhood, is making all men feel brothers. Then I miss our Roman games: the gladiator is unknown, men do not fight with wild beasts or with each other unto wounds and even death for the public amusement and at the public expense; on the contrary, statesmen do not amuse people, they instruct them, build schools and colleges, create universities, libraries, galleries, appeal to their reason, rule by help of the reason to which they appeal. Here, too, I perceive the influence of the religion; its spirit of gentleness will

not allow men to feel amused at blood and death, and its spirit of humanity makes it so respect and regard men that it wishes every man to be taught. Then, too, there are no slaves here, every man is free; the proudest noble, the mightiest senator, the very sovereign dare not lay violent hands on any one, or, like our patricians, throw their servants to feed their lampreys. Law is queen, and all men are equal before it, and all, save the lawless and criminal, are by it made free. Here, too, the religion has been at work; where men become brothers they can be slaves no more. War, I find, is still common, has even become far more terrible in its implements and scale of destruction, though this makes it less frequent and wasteful of life. Yet here even the same spirit has been active; the victors do not kill their captives or sell them into slavery, they protect them rather; while enemies respect each other's dead and agree to help the wounded without respect of persons or armies. Indeed, the benevolence of this modern world surprises me; the spirit of philanthropy seems universal. We exposed our children, thankful to have so simple and efficient a means of practising domestic economy; here they build hospitals for the foundling and the outcast. We thought life a burden to be borne only so long as agreeable; but here they hold suicide a sin, connivance at it a crime; suffering they seek to soothe, weakness to nurse, building for those too poor to command comfort those places called infirmaries, where skilled men and ministering women wait to serve the sick and heal the diseased. It is altogether wonderful to me, and would be unintelligible, were it not for this religion which I once so much despised. It has worked so extraordinary a change in human nature that it hardly seems the nature of the same humanity. This is indeed a thing above nature as we understood it, above even the gods, as we understood

them. A God higher than our highest must, through this "detestable superstition" as I deemed it, have entered into manhood that He might do, what He evidently is doing, make an altogether new mankind."

ii.

But for us the standard of comparison is not Rome in the Tiberian or Neronian age; it is the ideal of our religion. That is an easy virtue which is satisfied with excelling the past; that virtue alone is brave which judges itself by perfection, and is, by the judgment, braced to attempt better things. The overheard reflections of a Roman, suddenly confronting a world he imperfectly understands, might easily become a soothing and delusive song—a fatal thing to men whose warfare is not accomplished; hardly, indeed, well begun. So we must look at our age with our own eyes, and compare it not with what was in a distant past, but with what ought to have been, and, were we allowed to speak of possibilities, with what would have been, had the Churches been equal to the religion of Christ. The whole field is far too immense to be here surveyed; and so we must confine our attention to one or two points of primary significance.

1. There is the attitude of the cultivated and intellectual classes to the Christian religion. I will not say that it moves me either to alarm or despondency, but it does fill me with anxious sympathy and concern. It were a mistake to imagine that these classes are, either as a body or as regards their larger proportion, estranged from Christianity. They are not. We cannot forget—it would be wrong if we did—that the two greatest living names in English literature are the names of poets conspicuous, not simply for their reverence, but for their service to religion; and so long as Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning live, it dare not be said that either the intellect or the culture

of England has broken with faith. And they do not stand alone: a great number of the most eminent men in science, in philosophy, in letters, in art, and in education are men distinguished by the most sincere and simple-minded piety. But many are deeply and frankly estranged: some are known mainly because of the candid way in which they have declared their estrangement; others have made themselves famous by the skill with which they have used their science or criticism or art to discredit religion. To name names were invidious; the tendency is too common a characteristic of our day to call for such detail. The most distinctive and authoritative English philosophy is an agnosticism which, on the most favourable interpretation of it, makes God dumb and leaves man standing before Him a puzzled, perplexed, and unsatisfied inquirer. The two leading scientific doctrines, the Correlation of the Physical Forces and Evolution, have been used by certain, if not of the most eminent, yet of the most widely known, physicists on the one hand, and naturalists on the other, as forms and occasions of polemic against Theism. Literary criticism has been made the vehicle of a most unbelieving and often cynical spirit; through the men and systems of the past, the men and faith of the present have been most cunningly assailed. Art in becoming pre-Raphaelite is tending to become monotonous and unspiritual; its idealism but sensuous sentiment; its realism sickly passion; its classicism emasculated imitation, most false where it ought to be most true. They say, "Art has no concern with morality," but they forget in admiring the fine naturalism of classical art the noble morality of the men that made the art classical. And so our modern æstheticism is but pseudo-classicism, knows not how to be sacred and spiritual, knows only how to be profane and sensuous; when it

essays to depict the holiest persons and scenes it but pains by its gross and grotesque realism. All this indicates, I will not say the disaffection of the cultivated spirit to Christ, but certainly widespread estrangement. Society approves what it could not bear were it sensitive in conscience and reverent in heart. The atmosphere around it is becoming less favourable to belief; religion is losing its old sanctity, because without its old supermacy. The society where a man becomes rather more of a favourite and a hero for his aggressive belligerency or finely salted satire against religion, can hardly be called a religious society. And who will say that it is otherwise with what is esteemed the cultivated society of England?

This state of matters occasions me, I have said, grave concern; yet less concern than regret. I care little indeed about frivolous fashion; it will always come and go according to the ruling spirit of the time, and its religion or irreligion will be a very small matter. But I do deeply care for what it may indicate, the lapse of noble and commanding spirits from the Christian faith. The loss of such is to be altogether regretted. The men and the faith alike suffer; it would ennoble them, they would adorn it, increase immensely its power for good. There are men now living concerning whom, were the wish of Paul ever a becoming or a holy wish, it might be allowed to say, "For their sakes I could wish myself accursed from Christ." To trace their unbelief to pride of intellect, or to any save an honourable cause, is to do them grievous wrong. Yet there they stand, estranged in intellect and conscience from the faith of the centuries; and how are they to be reconciled? The how, indeed, is as hard to find as the need of reconciliation is obvious. No religion can afford to lose choice spirits, least of all Christianity. It has done too much for them, owes too much to them,

they are too able to serve it to be spared. In the past it has enlisted and made them, as it were, its van and rear-guard. The great minds of the Christian centuries have been Christian minds. When the religion began its aggressive course, each side could claim noble intellects; on the heathen, stood Seneca, Plutarch, Epictetus, Tacitus, Pliny; on the Christian, Peter, Paul, John, and their fellow-workers. But the balance has never been so even since; it turned swiftly and deeply to the religion, and has inclined to it till now. In the second century Juvenal, Marcus Aurelius, Lucian, and Celsus, were, to say the least, outweighed by Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement. In the third century, the ascetic and speculative genius of Plotinus and the critical intellect of Porphyry touched with sunset glory the eventide of paganism, but the brightening dawn of the Christian day was proclaimed by the eloquence of Tertullian, the learning of Origen, the statesmanship of Cyprian. In the fourth century intellect had deserted the old religions, Julian, Libanius, and their host of obscure rhetors, but form a background that throws into the more marvellous brilliancy the galaxy of contemporary fathers, Athanasius, Eusebius, Basil, the Gregories, Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine. These were the men of the century; their presence on the Christian side but proved the hopelessness of Julian's apostacy; to the faith they represented Imperial edicts were but the sound and fury that signify nothing. From that hour to this intellect has been Christian; even the century that might seem the great exception, the eighteenth, was none, for while the men who made most noise in their own day were infidel, the men who exercised the deepest and most abiding influence were not. No man was so feared, read, spoken about as Voltaire; but who reads or cares about him to-

day? At the opening of the century stands Leibnitz, at its middle Butler, at its close Kant, and were there three mightier names in it, any names so full of living and quickening spirit? Christianity has, then, a sort of hereditary claim on the foremost intellects, owes to them gratitude, feels for them love. They have served her, have helped her to serve man, been the chosen vehicles of her profoundest and most plastic influences. And living intellect needs the religion; it is full of disquiet, of yearnings after the Infinite it derides. Its cynicism, its scorn, its bitter humour, its irony, are all born of discontent. Its art is the very apotheosis of sadness, of sensuous desire too indolent and weary to be honest passion. Its characteristic philosophy becomes progressively sadder; in Mr. Herbert Spencer's "First Principles," there is a glow as of religious enthusiasm; in the "Principles of Sociology" only a wearisome analysis of matters that never existed in the realms of history and of mind. The men who have broken with faith feel in their best moments sadder, almost inclined to turn back into their yesterdays in search of the faith and hope they have lost. One who comes of a noble spiritual stock, whose delicate raillery of the English Philistine—the man over-zealous in religion—is but inverted admiration, has allowed us to hear "the eternal note of sadness" that comes to him as on Dover beach he looks at the calm sea, watches the full tide and the moon that "lies fair upon the Straits," and thinks,

> "The Sea of Faith
> Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
> Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
> But now I only hear
> Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
> Retreating, to the breath
> Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
> And naked shingles of the world."

The heart as well as the imagination speaks there; that is poetry touched with emotion, the sorrow that comes of a loss too great to be repaired by any gain. In its deep and growing sadness, the cultivated spirit seems to ask—who will show us a force strong enough to draw the tide from its ebb to the full that it may clothe the naked shore and throw its soft yet sheltering embrace round our hearts and lives?

2. But a matter of even greater concern is the attitude of the industrial and labouring classes to religion. Their attitude becomes to me the gravest of all reproaches to the Churches of England, the most significant example of misunderstood duties and neglected responsibilities. Our religion was born in poverty; its sympathies and associations were with the poor. The Master laboured with His own hands, and "the common people heard Him gladly." Its apostles were workmen; it drew its earliest recruits from the men who toiled. The change it worked in the world was accomplished from below, through the elevation of the masses, not by the action of kings. But what marks the religion of our day is the loss of the masses. Their estrangement is more general and, I will add, more deplorable than that of the cultivated, for the Churches are more directly responsible for it. Yet not all in an equal degree. The Church of Rome, at least here, holds its poor; and the Methodists have in certain districts and among certain classes achieved wonders. But, taken throughout, the English working man has too largely ceased to be a religious person in the Christian sense. He seldom attends church or chapel; does not admire, often cordially despises, the parson; thinks religion helps him but little in the struggle for life; thinks it hinders him rather, being mostly on the side of privilege and capital. He may not be a pronounced secularist, but he strongly believes that a

religion which is not good for this life cannot be good for the next; what is not openly and strongly for justice and freedom and against oppression cannot be of God and the truth. His battle for his rights and liberties has been mainly his own; while many of the men who have helped him have been loudly anti-Christian, too few Christian men have dared to apply religion to his problems and his conflicts. The tendency of mind thus begotten everything has encouraged: the rapid growth of large cities has been fatal to simplicity of life and mind, the action of the immense factories and workshops has been to create monotonous uniformity, to repress individuality, to prevent or blight the culture of the home. Amusements have been too much left to the tavern, houses have been so built as to make comfort, at times even decency, hardly possible; and for long education was too rare and too poor to leave the mind anything but an uncultivated blank, or, at best, a congenial home for weeds. But, whatever the causes, there the fact stands, a large proportion of our working and labouring classes are either indifferent to religion or opposed to it. I dare not venture on the percentages, they are so immense as to seem simply incredible; but whatever they are, they ought to call the Churches to earnest searchings of heart for past neglect and strenuous attempts at present duty.

To attempt to speak one's regret were vain; it is too deep for speech. The typical English workman has many noble qualities, is plain-spoken, straight-forward, in the best sense veracious, with an innate love of justice that makes him almost by nature the friend of the wronged and down-trodden. He is not like the gifted youth of the clubs, sceptical of all good, airily indifferent to truth, cynical to men who have convictions, scornful of sincerity or enthusiasm as of a thing "in bad form;" but he is a convinced man with beliefs he holds strongly and states

roundly; certain, whatever his theology, that a man ought to stand by the truth, that a mean man can come to no good, that principle ought to rule and justice be impartial. To leave such natures unpenetrated by religion isto do them grievous wrong; it is to leave without its best blessing the land that owns them. To possess her sons of industry, to make of them the best possible—that, and nothing less, ought to be the ambition of every Church in England.

IV.

But now we come to the vital and critical matter:—What ought to be the attitude and behaviour of our Religion, or rather the Churches which represent and interpret it, in the face of these features and tendencies of our Age? We shall attempt to deal with the question as it relates first to the cultivated, and, next, to the industrial classes.

i.

1. The attitude of the cultivated, with all its various phenomena, social, literary, ethical, æsthetic, is the expression of a broad and strong intellectual movement or tendency, what we may call a heathen revival. The terms are not used to convey reproach, but simply to characterise and distinguish. The endeavour, sometimes conscious, oftener unconscious, is to get behind Christ, and take up the development of man at the point He touched it and turned it into His own channels. The tendency is not specifically Greek or Roman, but broadly heathen, seeks less to realize the forms of a departed age than to recover the basis of its thought and life. Its characteristic is Naturalism, the expulsion from thought, not merely of the supernatural, but of the transcendental and spiritual, and the return to a nature sensuously interpreted. This *Naturalism* is so marked as to constitute the differentiat-

elementing of our intellectual movement. The thought of the Christian centuries, even where it has been least Christian, has still been penetrated by ideal and theistic elements. Theism has been, as it were, its common basis. The Renaissance was indeed a classical, but it was not a heathen, revival. The guiding genius was ideal, Plato and the Poets, and these as, if not baptized into Christ, yet as prophetic and supplemental of Him. The return was not to heathenism, but to the idealism that had laboured to transcend it. In the middle ages, as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, individual thinkers strove to rise from the current dualism to a higher and more rational unity; but these efforts were, like Spinoza's, Pantheistic, either made thought the ultimate reality or an attribute co-ordinate with extension. In the last century the movement away from Christ was towards Deism, a system which gave God singularly little to do, left Him Creator, but relieved Him from the labours and cares of Providence. Still, though more zealous for His being than His action, Deism retained God for thought, and made duty to Him a necessary part of a reasonable and perfect life. But the intellectual movement of to-day is impatient of God, will have no nature that contains any trace of Him, only a nature charged with force sufficient to do all its own work. If it cannot escape the idea of cause, it will speak of it as matter or force, or even the unknown, not as reason, or will, or God. If it finds a purpose, marked by an extraordinary series of ascending creations, running through the history alike of the earth and man, it will speak of it in the terms of evolution, which, it sagely observes, has abolished at once the idea and the evidences of design, not perceiving that it has only substituted an immenser and more transcendent teleology. The quest of the modern intellect is for a nature without God.

where it can do without Him it speaks in the language of constructive science; where it cannot, it uses the speech of agnosticism, and delivers unctuous homilies on the modesty and excellence of ignorance. And so the only nature it will have is the nature of the senses, and hence its Naturalism is material and sensuous. It will have neither the idealism nor the deity of Plato, neither the reason nor the ideal end of Aristotle, but only the atoms of Demokritos, the senses and the pleasures of Epikuros. The heathenism it revives is not the spontaneous and primitive, as of Homer, where Nature is alive with the gods, and holds in her bosom, unsolved and unevolved, the problems and the germs of all the philosophies, but it is decadent and exhausted heathenism, as of Lucretius and the Sceptics, without its gods, without the imagination to which Nature was but the history and parable of the divine. Such a revival may be made in force, but it is a revival of spent forces, that can gather only for an early and more complete dispersion.

The parallel implied in these last sentences is not incidental; it is material and designed. The intellectual basis of modern is essentially akin to the intellectual basis of ancient thought before it was confronted and supplanted by Christianity. This affinity might be exhibited in detail, but time is too inexorable to allow more than a few illustrative points. Lucretius, for example, might be reckoned almost as much a thinker of the nineteenth century as of his own; his poem is as to form Latin, but as to substance, it belongs to the school of modern English physical metaphysics. Like a true son of the school, he has unbounded contempt for all without it, unbounded admiration for all within it. The older superstitions have weighed down life and trodden upon man, but when the *Graius Homo, the man of* Greece, his master Epikuros, rose all was

light; he passed the flaming walls of the world, traversed in thought the immeasurable universe, and returned a conqueror, to tell us what can and what cannot come into being. Have we not heard effusive scientists so speak of a late distinguished naturalist, or the distinguished living explorer of the unknown and interpreter of the unknowable? Then, his world is a world without design, atoms are the unmade makers of all things; driven by mechanical necessity, they have been at work during infinite time past, have collided, cohered, combined, dissolved, tried every kind of combination, till, at length, they have laboured out the goodly nature we see, causing "the streams to replenish the greedy sea with copious river-waters; and the earth, fostered by the heat of the sun, to renew its produce, and the race of living things to come up and flourish, and the gliding fires of ether to live." Earth has gotten the name of mother, since she produced all living creatures, many even now taking form from rains and the heat of the sun. Beyond this the scientific speculations of Tyndall or even Haeckel can hardly be said to have passed. And religion, how did it come to be? By sleep and dreams and death, aided by thunder and earthquakes and other dread phenomena of nature, giving the idea of invisible beings, mighty and many-limbed gods, unfriendly and terrible to man. Were it not for the archaic and Latin form, we might almost imagine we were here reading a condensed but elegant poetic version of the first part of Mr. Herbert Spencer's "Principles of Sociology." Yet he would not banish faith or forbid worship; nay, if a man thinks right to call the sea Neptune, corn Ceres, and earth the mother of the gods, he is free to do it, "if he only forbear in earnest to stain his mind with foul religion." And in his own splendid invocation to Alma Venus, hominum divomque

Voluptas, he shows us how one who has denied the gods can yet use their speech and call for help upon "the sole mistress of all things, without whom nothing rises up into the divine borders of light, nothing grows to be glad or lovely." And have we not heard that the new religion is to be the worship of the universe; that the voice of science is the voice of the only God that now lives. Said Goethe, "He who has science and art has also religion," and so say they all. And Mr. Herbert Spencer considerately resolves all religious beliefs into "modes of the manifestation of the Unknowable," and so he exhorts each man to regard himself "as one of the myriad agencies through whom works the unknown cause," and his beliefs as beliefs it has produced that he may profess. What more or better could Lucretius himself have said when he implored the Venus, who for him personified the fructifying forces of earth, to "give to his lays an everlasting charm?"

It is impossible to pursue the parallel, though it could be made most complete, illustrative of all that is most modern in the way of conceiving religion, handling religious history, criticizing religious thought, and representing and describing religious life. Yet enough has been said to enable us to emphasize one point—the thought most opposed to Christianity is ancient, the thought, too, of a decadent period, a period of philosophical feebleness, when the great thinkers of antiquity had ceased to reign because they had ceased to be understood. The strength of the modern movement is the strength of reaction, not of progress; to speak in the language of Evolution, it is an instance of a reversion to an earlier type, not the development of a new and higher. There is nothing so old as the newest objections to Christianity, they are as ancient as the earliest literary criticism of the religion. M. Renan is a sort of Celsus *redivivus*, Mr. Matthew Arnold a kind of moderniz-

Lucian, only with better manners, more religion, and a higher mind. Men say, "As the order of nature cannot be broken, miracles are impossible, and therefore Christianity, as essentially miraculous, is necessarily false. It implies, too, an unworthy idea of God, that He has so badly arranged matters that He needs to interfere with His own order on behalf of man." Now hear Celsus: "The world is not made for man, for him as little as for the dolphin or the eagle: it is made solely to be a work of God, complete in itself, and in all its parts; the individuals in it have reference to each other only so far as they have reference to the whole. God cares for the whole . . . and He is angry at men as little as he is angry at apes and flies." Again, he says: "Christians are like a lot of worms holding a council in the mud, and debating the question, which of them is the greatest sinner, yet only that they may the more proudly say, God is, and we are next-of-kin to Him, like to Him in all things; all things are for our sakes; though we have sinned, God has sent His Son to save us and burn up the wicked." And what other, or better, save in politeness, is the modern satire of the Christian idea? M. Renan's natural history of the belief in the resurrection is well known; a possessed woman, once the home of seven devils, unable to yield her Lord to death, fancies she sees Him, then believes it, and proclaims her belief till all receive it. The theory is in Celsus; a fanatical woman, and a band of credulous men explain the whole matter. In other points, the affinity is rather with Matthew Arnold. Celsus has a defence of national religions against the aggressive universalism of Christianity, and so remarkable is it that a too hasty translation might almost make it look like an unrevised version of Mr. Arnold's apology for the Anglican establishment. We are too prosaic to dare an excursion into those realms of imagination, wit, satire,

ard sweet reasonableness, where our modern critic has his agreeable home. Mr. Arnold is a man of inimitable gravity, but it is possible to take the gravest man too gravely. It has been the sin of the Philistines to be too serious to be understood of him, and they have had to expiate their sin by understanding him too seriously. And so it may be the part of wisdom simply to say, "The stream of tendency that makes for righteousness," is as old as Buddha, and the reduction of religion to conduct, or "morality touched by emotion," is as ancient as Stoicism.

But within all this similarity there are significant differences. The modern is more reverent than the ancient thinker; his spirit is sadder, humaner, more possessed of the enthusiasm of humanity, with a deeper sense alike of the necessity of religion and its capabilities for good. These are the Christian elements in the modern intellect; of them it has not been able, if it had been able it would not have been willing, to make a complete renunciation. Christianity has so made the mind of man new that it can never again become exactly the old mind. Just look at the most characteristic of the moderns: every man of them is struggling towards a religion, is endeavouring to create one, to place his personal faith, new reasoned and intellectual, over against the historical faith, which has the glory, but also the burden of the centuries. Not every one has had the courage with Comte to institute a hierarchy and order of worship, to make a calendar of the saints of humanity, to use the living mother, wife, and daughter to dispossess the ancient Virgin, and to substitute *le grand Etre*, collective man, for God; but not any one has had the courage to abandon all religion, or dismiss it in the hot words of Lucretius. The last words of Strauss were those in which he sketched the religion that was to be, the worship of the universe, the order that, while physical and

necessary, was still benevolent and moral. M. Renan passed those miserable months when gay and brilliant Paris lay within the iron circle of the German armies, in speculating as to how best humanity was to create Deity, or, as he phrased it, "organize God." That was to be the sum of its achievements, the symbol that its course was complete; Evolution will have done its perfect work when mankind has developed Deity. The philosopher of Pessimism has found out that though it is impossible to worship the cause of so miserable a world, it is necessary to worship something, the religion of the spirit is needful to alleviate the miseries of the flesh. But it is needless to complete the catalogue; all witness to the same thing; man cannot live without religion, he must have one, whatever its kind. And two qualities it must have—it must be reverent and humane; must, on the one hand, at once quicken and satisfy man's yearning after the perfect and the permanent, and must, on the other, gladden his life, soften his sorrows, govern his affections, purify his sympathies, direct and regulate his energies in behalf of all mankind. The modern mind feels a reverence the ancient never knew; the new religions burn with a humanity the old never possessed. And these things are the work of Christ; He has made the thought of God so majestic, yet so benign, that man never feels but awed in its presence; the love of man so needful to a perfect manhood and to the perfecting of mankind, that no sane soul can forget its being or ignore its claims.

2. Now this analysis of the characteristics and elements of the modern intellectual movement, so far at least as its set is away from or against Christianity, has showed us how it ought to be dealt with. It ought not to be despised or ignored, or, worst of all, reviled on the one hand, or conciliated and softly spoken on the other, but it must be

frankly and honestly met face to face. What we have before us is the conflict of two antithetical conceptions of the universe; two radically opposed views as to nature and man, their constitution, course, destiny. It is here where the issue must be joined; the battle fought out. Compromise is impossible, a mechanical view of the universe leaves us no freedom, and so no God; a spiritual, or theistic view of the universe leaves order because it affirms reason but it denies necessity. If the movement be intellectual the intellect alone can meet and master it. It will not do to leave it to the blended anathemas and lamentations of pietism on the one hand, or the effusions of cosmopolitan religious sentiment on the other. The men who believe that the highest truths of religion are the highest truths of reason, must speak as they believe. There is no worse foe to his faith than the man who hates rational thought as if it were the invention of Satan, rather than the gift of God there is no man who so little understands it as the man who thinks devout feeling or an inspired heart, the whole of religion. Emotion is particular, thought is universal; what belongs to emotion has no worth but for the individual; what exists for thought has value for all. Fine sentiments do not make strong men; massive truths are needed to move rational minds. Where truth is concerned, thought must be exercised in order that true feeling may be created and right conduct result. He who does not seek to know the truth, can never truly either live or love. In a recent work on "Natural Religion" we have what we may call an attempt at an Eirenicon. The ground of peace is to be the dictum that religion is admiration; and we all admire, the man of science the order and immensity of the universe, the man of culture the perfection of manhood and the creations of art, and the man of faith God and the ways of God. But the only

point of agreement is in the word admiration; in the thing there is radical difference. We admire the admirable, and the admirable we do not feel, we conceive. The absolutely admirable is the absolutely perfect; what is less than this we do not wholly admire. Physical harmonies are not moral, may awaken sensuous wonder, or awe, not the finely touched moral admiration which cannot choose but worship. The harmonies of a perfect culture or perfect art may impart the highest intellectual or imaginative pleasure, but cannot kindle the admiration evoked by the absolute ethical beauty of the Altogether Good. This latter stands alone, for it alone is worship, born, as it were, of the vision of God. And he who would obscure this vision and make it a matter of no moment, or a thing that may be without God, knows too little of the nature of religion to be a maker of peace.

We come back, then, to our fundamental position: we must build on the conception of God, find in it the material for the bulwark that needs to be raised to meet and break the modern intellectual movement towards ancient heathenism. The Christian idea of God is full of unexhausted possibilities, it is rich in wealth untouched by thought, in unevoked energies for religion and conduct. It is simply the sublimest idea that has ever dawned upon the mind of man, holds in it a multitude of elements any one of which is grander than all the sublimities of science. Do men stand in awe before the immensities of space and time, oppressed by the vision of the countless suns and systems that sleep in the bosom of the infinite, shine to each other as stars, and move in their vast orbits as to stateliest music? Yet what is that to the thought of an Intelligence that knows no here or there, only an everywhere; no yesterday or to-morrow, only an Eternal Now? an Intelligence whose reason is order, who had but to think to

create all worlds, to whose thought these worlds are but the words and syllables of a visible speech? Geology has opened up a marvellous vista into the past; imagination grows giddy as, standing with its feet on the solid earth, it looks back into the eternity behind it, and sees the slow-passing ages that are the successive moments in the history of its own becoming. But that is a brief and empty vision compared with the thought of a God whose home is eternity, who ever was a Maker, whose purpose runs through all ages, and whose will works in all worlds, whose reason made and maintains the order of the whole, yet whose heart waits on all persons, and creates all good. And if we turn from science in the universe, and look at science in relation to man, his problems, his sorrows, his miseries, his mysteries, our religious conception is touched with a sublimity still more incomparable. Science has achieved much through and for man, but it must not be forgotten that man has made the sciences, not the sciences man. The better he has become, the more they have grown, and so it has been through what religion has made him that he has been able to make the sciences. They have in many ways blessed their maker, have enriched his life, filled it with innumerable interests, given him command over nature, its resources and forces, have caused him to become a wonder to himself, made his own progress and discoveries his own greatest astonishment. But in one aspect the sciences have accomplished singularly little; they have not found out how to make man a perfect or even a better moral being; they may have lessened the suffering, but it is doubtful whether they have increased the happiness of the world; it is certain they have not found any way by which a guilty man may be made good, or a will in rebellion against order brought into harmony with it. On *the contrary, modern* science has made a nobler morality

and remedial moral action a harder, I do not say, a rarer thing. Its most distinctive doctrine is, when applied to our gravest moral and social problems, a ruthless doctrine. Progress is worked through the struggle for existence and by survival of the fittest. That means the non-fittest either do not, or should not, survive; it is better for the whole that they perish. But, now, note the pitiless way in which this doctrine acts, how it paralyzes beneficence and all the gracious and remedial humanities. It estimates a man solely by his worth to the community, is proud of him only as he has the strength that can be victorious in the struggle. He has no personal value in its eyes. Wasted manhood is manhood to be abolished, not reclaimed. Moral evil is a species of disease to be cured by being killed; disease is a sort of social crime to be punished by death. Disease and crime are thus alike guilty, sins against the common good, and the sinner is to be neither spared nor saved, but simply and speedily destroyed. Society so conceived is void of moral qualities, is a realm where strength is king, where order is but the action of victorious force, where the feeble and the bad are alike offenders against law and dangerous to life. In it the gentle spirits have no place, nor the tender souls that cling to the strong, soften them into helpfulness and sweeten them by their fragrance. A doctrine that knows no pity can work no cure; in a society where destruction of the guilty and the weak is the only remedy there may be victorious forces, but there cannot be happy men.

Now, let us look at our ultimate Christian conception in the same relations, see how it affects our idea of man, alike as individual and as race, both in harmony and out of harmony with the higher laws of life and being. God is reason, and reason is order; His rational thought is the basis of all our harmonies, whether physical or moral.

But reason is not blind, its very means are ends, it loves the instruments it makes to use. The men God thought into being God loves; they exist for His purposes, and His purposes must be good. A spirit is not like a mass of organized atoms in process of ceaseless change, losing one form only to assume another, in all their changes never increasing, never decreasing the sum total of the forces of the universe; but it is a permanent being, progressive while permanent, endowed with almost infinite capabilities. Spirits rose to be society to God; His beatitude blossomed, as it were, into creation, and men became that the subjective happiness of the Infinite might become an objective infinitude. But spirits are by their very nature objects of discipline, are there to learn obedience, to become by it sons of God. That is the end; towards it all the moral agencies of the universe work. A man is in God's sight an actual or potential son, known and handled as such; there, because God loved, able to sin, to be miserable, but not able to compel the God who loved to hate him, or refrain from working the utmost good his badness will allow. But if we so conceive the relation of the Creator to man, think how we must conceive human life. Every man is of value to God, has a place in His purpose, and a part in His love, and so the man's loss is, as it were, a loss to God. It is not enough, then, that the fittest survive, and the non-fittest die; it is necessary that the utmost and best possible be made out of every man, that the strong not simply forbear to crush the weak, but use his strength to protect him, that he, too, may become strong and sound. The man who has most affinity with God will be the most beneficent of men; he will hate guilt, but be pitiful to the guilty, doing his best, not simply to punish crime, but to convert the *criminal, that by* conversion of the persons he may make

an end to the thing. On the mechanical theory the hope of the world lies in the penalty that deals quickest and most utter death; on the Christian, in the regeneration that changes the man and uplifts the life. The state of struggle is a state of war, or, at best, of the armed truce which breeds coarse and selfish passions in those who see in the weak and bad only elements of disturbance; but a state of moral law is a state of discipline and progress, where the good of the whole is worked only through the service and good of all the parts. Kepler thought that to discover the laws of the universe was to think the thoughts of God after Him; the Christian believes that by devotion to his kind, lessening its evil and misery, multiplying its virtue and happiness, he is fulfilling the purpose of God. Through the good man the plan of God is realized; he is a factor in its fulfilment. To him while men do evil, or suffer, or are ignorant, something is which God hates, which he as God's liegeman must contend against and destroy. Where this idea reigns it commands the mightiest moral enthusiasms and energies into the cause of progress, bids them work for the amelioration and happiness of the race. The man possessed of God is an enthusiast for humanity; his passion is to see realized in time the ideals of the Eternal. And so we must maintain our fundamental Christian conception, make it in its fullest integrity the basis of our intellectual life. The spirit of man has grown sadder, I had almost said more savage to himself and less merciful to his fellows under the sway of the more speculative sciences. Life is losing its enthusiasms, men are growing weary of it, feeling it a more insoluble problem, a more intolerable burden. Pessimism is the coming philosophy, the Unknown of Spencer is being translated into the Unconscious of Von Hartmann, and a world which is only a struggle for existence is being openly described

as so miserable as to be much worse than none. The result is inevitable; empty life of its transcendental and divine ideals, and it ceases to be worth living. Once it so ceases, men will not be at the trouble to live it, or to mend it. The belief in God is the inspiration of man; the moment it dies progress will cease, reaction begin, and the race of men stand within measurable distance of their end.

ii.

But now the close of this discussion brings us into the presence of another and even graver series of problems—those concerned with the relation of religion to the estranged of the industrial classes. These in a sense more nearly concern us; belong to what may be called the region of practical politics. For I may at once and frankly state, that I do not regard the causes of estrangement here as in any appreciable degree intellectual, due to so-called difficulties of belief; but mainly practical and political, due to the inefficiency of the Churches, their failure to make religion the personal and social force it ought to be. I know that there is much active and aggressive disbelief among working men, but I also know that it draws much of its vigour from the social, political, and economical doctrines with which it has been skilfully allied. It is the positive, not the negative doctrines that attract and command. It is also true that the objections to religion that here prevail can be better met by instruction than by argument; they are for the most part based on partial or erroneous ideas as to what religion is, and what is necessary to it, on the narrowest and least enlightened views as to the Bible and its history and the relation of its history to the truths it reveals. Hence the main matter here is not apology; it is exposition, an opportunity not for a reasoned defence, but an exhibition of the religion in its truth and in its power.

Now, this seems to me the very hardest thing to attain; yet the most necessary of attainment. Our history and our methods are here alike against us, so much has to be unlearned and undone, so much to be learned and accomplished. The conflict with revived heathenism hardly troubles me—the nature of man is sufficient guarantee that the victory will be to the ideal and divine. But here it is not nature, it is the Churches that are concerned. They must work in the spirit of the Master, and for His ends, do what they have never yet done, justice to the religion of Christ. There is one thing I profoundly feel—the way in which the Churches, taken as a whole, have allowed the industrial classes to grapple, almost unaided, with their problems, to fight, unhelped, their way into their liberties and rights. I will not speak of the Established Church, of the way in which it has pauperized the labourer, and divided the aristocracy, whose education it has controlled for centuries, from the people of England, and, as a consequence, from the conditions that make the simplest justice natural and possible. Of these things I will not speak, for I feel too deeply our common sin, and am too anxious to reach the question, What is the remedy for these ages of neglect and wrong-doing? The simplest is the completest answer: the Churches must set about realizing the religion of Christ, making it a veritable law for life, translating its principles into living forces not for the maintenance of what is, but for the creation of what ought to be.

Now, I wish not to be misunderstood. To me, the primary work of the religion is to save men; of the Churches, to preach the Gospel. This is fundamental, work that must be done before anything else is possible; that left undone disqualifies for anything else. It is through the saving of persons that the world is to be saved. But what concerns us is not this primary duty,

but the conditions necessary to its fulfilment, how the Churches are to become better able, as regards the great body of the people, successfully to carry it out. It is not enough to organize evangelistic missions, however excellent and fit these may be. It is not the distinction of the industrial classes to be in peculiar need of conversion; it is the need of the so-called upper classes in a still more eminent degree. What is necessary to reach and affect both is a more fully realized Christianity, the resolute endeavour to bring the religion professed of the Churches into completer harmony with the mind of Christ. The toiling classes do not feel what it can do for them, do not see what it has done. The Gospel is full of great economical principles, and these never so needed to be made explicit as at this hour. There is the land question, whether it be good to allow the aggregation of land into a few hands, to permit the rights of property to override the duties of humanity, and whether it be within a man's moral power to depopulate the district he owns, or sacrifice the people who lived in it and by it to his own pecuniary and ambitious schemes. On a question like that the Religion that loves man and lives by his love, has the foremost right to be heard. Then, too, it ought to have something to say on the question of Capital and Labour. To it the millions that toil are not hands, they are men, the neighbours and brothers of the rich, to be dealt with as their own flesh and blood. The question is not settled when labour gets a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, or, what is as necessary, gives a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. That is but the mechanical and mercantile side of it—the engine well stoked that its full power may be put forth; beneath it lies the religious side. Men do *not cease to* owe each other the primary and cardinal

religious duties when they become employers and employed; they rather owe these in an increased degree. Here men are brothers, bound to love one another, and love has its services as well as labour and capital. These services do not, like the condescension of the great or the charity of the rich, destroy self-reliance and lessen self-respect, but are able to create and enlarge both. There is no inspiration in mere mercenary toil; the wage paid only in money degrades both him that gives and him that takes. To work well a man must love his work, and he can never love his work if he hates or despises the persons for whom, or through whom, it is done. The employer of labour who is no lover of man will never ennoble the labour he employs. Make the Christian idea of brotherhood a living and governing idea, and our gravest industrial problems were solved. Labour would then have all its rights, and neglect none of its duties; capital would then, in doing all its duties, obtain all its rights. Common interests would then be no mere phrase, but a beneficent reality, for where all were inspired by one Spirit, all would be partakers of one body, and members one of another. Were the kingdom of God realized every man would be in his own order a worker, and every worker would receive his due and sufficient reward.

These must stand as cases typical of what is meant; religion ought to feel that social and industrial questions are peculiarly its own, not to be wisely or justly determined without its help. And to feel an obligation ought here to be to fulfil it; loss of opportunity is loss of actual and inherent power. Religion would be all the stronger for being more real, an operative and efficient factor in the spheres where men most stenuously live. Secularism should have had no excuse for its being; religion ought to be secular, and would be all the more spiritual and

eternal for so being. What does not make the most of man for time and time for man, will not make the best of his eternity. Eternity is now; the man who is, is man the immortal, and the aim of religion ought to be to realize the ideal of God in every man and in all his relations. For it is certain that the more the mind of Christ obtains without the greater will be our purchase over the inner thought of man. If we do nothing towards the incarnation of his mind in society and the State, we shall find that the forces now coming to the front will not be faithful or respectful to religion, aye, or even tolerant of it. Democracy is everywhere in the ascendant; the age of despotisms, of one-man sovereignties, is passing, has almost passed. The people are now the State, their will is the regnant will, and that will has this characteristic—it loves principles, it hates compromises, and the principles it loves must be regulative, fit to be applied to the work and guidance of life. And if religion is to control it, religion must become what Christ meant it to be, a real and applied law, opening its unworked mines of social, industrial, and political wisdom and truth. Oh, I often wish for one hour of the Master! What a revolution His mere appearance would work in the Churches that call themselves by His Name! Would He not speak somewhat thus? "I came not to create immense vested interests, wealthy corporations that fear loss too much either to gain men or to do justly between the poor for whom they are and the rich through whom they are, nor to form organized societies too anxious to justify their past sins to mind their present duties. I came to create a kingdom of the truth, where the truth was to reign and regulate all the relations of life, the conduct of all men and classes. My Gospel was to save sinners, to create peace between men and God, but also *between* man and man. All men were to be brothers;

each was to be loved of all, the common law the law of love. My truth is denied because my law is neglected; do not expect men to believe while you disobey. Let the reign of God be realized in your societies, and His Word will soon be victorious on the earth."

V.

This discussion as to the attitude of religion to the age, ought to have introduced us to another, viz., on the work and duties of the Churches. All that is now possible is to indicate one or two determinating principles.

1. The distinction between the Christian religion and the Churches is here cardinal. The religion creates the Churches; the Churches exist for the religion, interpret it to the people among whom they live. This it is which constitutes their immense responsibility; men think of Christianity as the Church they best know conceives and represents it. M. Renan, for example, in a recent book tells the story of his education and loss of faith. He makes us feel how the Spirit of Christ fascinated, held him with a spell he could hardly break. He says, in view of the supercilious scepticism which denies without being at the trouble either to inquire or think—"In fact few persons have the right to disbelieve in Christianity." But now, what gave him the right, what was the basis of his own denial? Let us hear: "One single dogma abandoned, one single teaching of the Church rejected, is negation of the Church and revelation." And what does this mean? That he construed the religion in the sense and terms of the papal Church, thought with it that they stood or fell together, and so believed himself driven, when he denied the claims of Rome, to deny the truth of Christianity. Yet the same Church illustrates in a favourable sense a point already emphasized. There is no people so loyal to a Church as the Irish are to the Church of Rome. And

why? Because that Church has so identified itself with the wrongs and aspirations of the people that the people feel that in being true to it they are true, not simply to their best friend, but to the best and noblest elements in themselves and in their history. Let these examples show the tremendous responsibilities of the Churches; as they represent Christ, the people will believe Christ to be; if they make religion live to the people, the people will live for it, even though it be in its most imperfect form.

2. The right of a Church to be is twofold; consists, on the one hand, in its power to interpret the religion, and, on the other, in its ability to make it a living and efficient factor of life and conduct to the people among whom it dwells. These two, indeed, are one; the Church that best interprets the religion will secure it the most victorious life. It is necessary to insist on this point, for it is not the history which a religious society has which is its vindication, but the degree in which it conforms to the essential religious ideal, and is capable of working for its complete embodiment. This constitutes the sole and indefeasible right of a Church to be, the sole, for that right is valid, and no other, which is based on the possession of the truth; the indefeasible, for that right, and no other, is owned and crowned of God which does the work of God among men.

3. A Church to be loyal to the idea and truths it bears must be Free. The ideals are never realized, are only in process of realization, and the Church that would best promote their realization must have no interests but the interests they create. Its enthusiasm ought to be for the ideal, a conflict against the evils and imperfections that are, and a struggle towards a better and more perfect future. But in order to do this, two things are necessary; first, the *emphasis must lie on* the truths and ideals it carries, and

next, it must be free to work by their inspiration and in their methods for their complete authority and embodiment. An established Church is not free enough to obey its own truth; it too much depends on man's law to make him feel the authority of God's. Established Churches are always strongest in periods of decadent belief, weakest in times of commanding and progressive enthusiasm. Two things at this moment make in their favour—the conservative instincts of an old and historical people, proud of their ancient institutions, and the current agnosticism, which makes many too uncertain or too indifferent in religion to bear the moral strain or tension of the Free Churches.

The characteristics most distinctive of an Established Church are almost necessarily political and social, but of a Free Church theological and ethical. The former may be theological and ethical, but in a much less essential and constitutive sense than the latter. It, again, may act in the field of politics, but its political is not its primary, is its secondary or derivative character. The being of an Established Church as established is one politically created and guaranteed; but the being of a Free Church as voluntary is one created by affinities of thought and life. This radical difference penetrates and determines in the subtlest way their respective characters. In the one the expediencies and compromises of statecraft find a congenial home; in the other it is more natural to give authority to principles, to receive inspiration from ideals. An Established Church thinks of the maintenance of the constitution rather than the good of the people; a Free Church thinks of the good of the people rather than the maintenance of the constitution, regards the constitution as good only so far as it promotes the people's good. The one conceives religion as in need of a nurse, the Church as

favoured by being made a suckling of kings; the other conceives religion as the nurse and master of sovereign and subjects alike, a kingdom of heaven where every king on earth is a vassal, and never can be any more. An Established Church is more of a static, but a Free Church more of a dynamic force in society; the one seeks its authority in the past, the other its ideals and inspiration in the future; the first is satisfied with what is, but the other strives towards what ought to be—the ideally perfect State, where all men have won by exercise the power to use their rights as citizens, to realize as persons the image of God, as peoples His kingdom of heaven on earth.

4. But this involves a further point: Free Churches can best do their work by being faithful to the truths they carry, the Word and Gospel of God. They are not to make the truth easy for man, but an authority over him—a veritable divine law. Much of the success and strength of Catholicism lies in the way it handles the weaknesses of men, in the skill with which it can compel these to serve its own ends. But it ought to be our part to speak to the noblest in man, to persuade the reason, to command the conscience. The higher the motives, the better the man; debased motives mean a depraved nature and an impure religion. Be it ours, then, to speak the truths God has given, and as given of God; sacrificing no truth manifestly His, abating no claim known or felt to be divine. Free Churches have no prescriptive rights; they must be true to truth and duty to live. They must be theological, speak positive, constructive truths as to God; they must be ethical, enforce every real and religious duty men can owe to God and man. Men must believe to live, and live as they believe. Theological agnosticism is religious death, leaves us without any absolute ethical system, any means by which the reign of

God can be realized through the reason and in the conscience of men. As teachers and preachers of eternal truths, look what magnificent institutions our Free Churches are, gifted with what splendid opportunities for instruction. Millions, we may say, meet every Sunday to worship God, to hear expounded truths they believe to be His, to confess sin, to utter thanksgiving, to plume the wings of hope and enlarge the spirit of love, so to let glorious eternity stream into dull time as to make it seem the luminous garment of God. Analyse a single congregation:—The employer, wealthy, educated, refined; the employed, hard-handed, hard-headed, begrimed in body and mind with the dust of toil; the teacher, burdened with thoughts communicable, incommunicable; the scholar, groping his way with many a stumble into knowledge; the mistress from the drawing-room; the maid from the kitchen; the well-to-do man of business, unfamiliar with hardship; and the needy tradesman, struggling hard to hold aloft his honour and keep the wolf from his door—these and hundreds more, meet to declare by common acts and words that they are children of one Father and heirs of one home. And think, the words they hear ought to be not only winged, but needed words, able to humble or exalt, to warn or encourage, to break into penitence or soothe into peace, to brace against temptation or cheer in sorrow. In the same pew the new-made bride and the new-made widow may sit; the one with a gladness, the other with a grief that lies too deep for tears. Side by side may worship a soul ripe, chastened, mellowed by the sunshine of the divine face, and a soul dumb with despair, lost in a night of fear, feeling that he would be only happy if he could fall

> "Upon the great world's altar stairs,
> That slope through darkness up to God."

Now, could anything equal in actual or potential power for good institutions that count supreme opportunities like these by the thousand? Churches ought to be the most splendid moral forces of the world, for their's are the most splendid moral moments in the life of man.

And now, in conclusion, may I speak a word to you, my brothers in the ministry of Jesus Christ? But what shall it be? I feel, as who does not? a feeble man in this work, able only to see what a man ought to be; not able, in any tolerable sense, to be it. Brothers, you may ask—"Why ought we to differ from other Christian men? What is proper in them is not improper in us; we but assert our common rights if we claim to live as they." True, brothers, if you put it so, and so put I will not argue the matter. But let me put it thus:—Ought we not to differ from other men, labour to live more purely, more nobly, with more simplicity of mind, more singleness of purpose? We have chosen our vocation, and we chose it thinking it the highest possible to man, thinking, too, that our vocation was of God. And shall we not live, and think, and endeavour as if we were the called of God rather than as if we were the "Hail Fellows" of the market and the street. We have, indeed, joined a noble company, and our ancestry is the most illustrious and honourable of the earth. It runs back into a most ancient past, begins with those Hebrew prophets who have been in some cases for three thousand years dead yet living speakers for God. Our nearer ancestry is still more glorious. The first Christian preacher was Christ—the greatest of discourses His Sermon on the Mount. Peter was a preacher, impetuous, impassioned, with a speech that was like "a mighty rushing wind." Paul was a preacher, great in thought, in labours, in the noble obscurity that his spirit changed into *deathless fame*. The muster roll of Christian preachers

is but the record of the grandest Christian names. John, the apostle of love, whose spirit is for ever incarnated in our fourth gospel; Athanasius, the maker for centuries of the Christian conception of God; Augustine, the mind that has for ages ruled and still rules the thought of the Western Church; Bernard, great as a monk, great as a mystic, but greater as a preacher of the truths that moved and reformed the middle ages; Martin Luther, son of a miner, author of the Reformation, strong speaker of the strong words that created Protestantism; Calvin, son of a French lawyer, creator of a modern theocracy, the scholar, thinker, and statesman that made the thought and policy that braved and beat back the counter-reformation; Latimer and Hooker, Baxter and Bunyan, Howe and Cudworth, Berkeley and Wesley—these are but typical names selected from our long ancestral roll, men who have made the preaching of the Cross as the very wisdom and the power of God. And the vocation these men adorned will honour any man, or any man's son; the arduous matter is for the man or man's son to honour the vocation. The power to do so comes of God alone, and only to the man who is loyal to his "everlasting gospel," the Truth which, Milton said, is strong, "next to the Almighty," and remains after every conflict, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

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